Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Eligibility for Graduate Students

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is the term used to determine if a student is making acceptable progress toward a degree. At the end of each semester for graduate students, a review of a student’s progress is conducted. A student’s failure to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress standards (for all terms enrolled, not just those terms that aid was received) may result in loss of federal aid eligibility.

Since eligibility for financial aid funding is contingent upon a student maintaining a minimum standard of satisfactory academic progress. The federal financial aid programs affected by these standards, but not exclusively limited to, include:

- Federal Direct Stafford Loan
- Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loan

Qualitative Standard – Grade Average

The Medical College of Wisconsin calculates grades for the graduate school the following way:

**Grading**

The Master of Science, Master of Public Health, Master of Arts, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees are conferred by the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and the Medical College of Wisconsin upon students who have successfully completed the required course of study and who have demonstrated academic excellence in the classroom and in research. The progress and performance of each matriculated student is reviewed by the faculty in the student's program at least yearly, at the end of the second semester of the academic year. These evaluations are submitted to the Graduate School Dean, who will notify the student if the evaluation is unsatisfactory in any regard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  .  .  . 4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-  .  .  . 3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+  .  .  . 3.3</td>
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AU . . . reported for student auditing a course at no credit

Any graduate student whose GPA is lower than 2.0 will be considered not making Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress and the steps listed under Financial Aid Warning, Probation, Appeal Process and Loss of Aid Eligibility listed below will be followed.
Students who register for xx295 (Readings and Research), xx299 (Master's Thesis), and/or xx399 (Doctoral Dissertation) will be evaluated in part on the basis of research progress. Progress will be evaluated annually by faculty who hold an appointment in the department or program in which the student is matriculated, and must accurately reflect the student's "progress" as perceived by the faculty.

Evaluation will be made according to policies established by the department or program, and grades will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following statuses do not count towards the SAP GPA:

- **Incomplete** - An evaluation of Incomplete is used to identify a student who, at the time a course has ended, has not yet completed the usual course requirements, but has been temporarily excused (e.g., because of illness) from doing so by the department. The grade of Incomplete can be used only when a student has not been able to complete course requirements for some acute and unexpected circumstance beyond the student's control. The Graduate School expects that the Incomplete will be converted as soon as possible. During the Fall and Spring terms the student has 60 days from the last day of class in a semester to have the I converted to another grade. During the summer session, the period is reduced to 30 days. Otherwise the grade will be converted to an F (failure). An Incomplete grade is not part of the qualitative component of SAP and is not included in the GPA. An Incomplete will be counted towards the quantitative SAP component and maximum Time Frame measures. Students’ status may change once a final grade is recorded.

- **Withdrawn** – withdrawn is defined as exiting a course much earlier during the course than WF or Withdrawn Failing which is defined as didn’t complete what was required for the course and withdrew at the last possible moment before the course ended.

- **Changes in majors or degrees** – a student would have to reapply for admission to the Graduate School and credits taken at the Medical College of Wisconsin may be transferred to the new program but grades are not transferred. Since grades are not transferred, qualitative SAP would not be used; however, the transferred credits from the prior program that are accepted by the Graduate School would be counted as attempted and completed credit hours for the quantitative SAP component which includes PACE and maximum Time Frame Measures.

- **Transfer Credits** – Coursework taken at another institution that is accepted and officially recorded on the transcript as transfer credit by the Graduate School of the Medical College of Wisconsin will count as both attempted and completed credit hours toward PACE and maximum Time Frame Measures.

- **Pursuit of a Second Degree** – both qualitative and quantitative components of SAP apply. Each degree program has specific Time Frame Measures and the grades that are submitted from each program will be used to determine qualitative SAP GPA.
The following statuses do count towards the SAP GPA:

- Completed courses
- Failed courses
- Remedial courses
- Repeated courses are calculated in the qualitative SAP GPA in accordance with the Academic Standing Guidelines on repeat coursework. Students may receive financial aid funding for the repeat of a failing grade or withdrawal of any class or classes.

**Quantitative Standard – Degree Completion Rate**

Students must complete two-thirds (0.67) of the courses for which they are enrolled. This rate is determined by taking the total completed courses and dividing it by the total registered courses.

**Pace**

A student must meet pace and progress toward graduation by successfully completing 2/3 of the cumulative units attempted.

A student must complete all requirements for their degree program within the time frame stated in the Graduate School’s handbook after first enrollment in the program, not including any time for approved leave of absence.

For the pace calculation, if a student receives a grade of fail, incomplete or withdrawal, this would count as courses attempted but not completed.

If the courses are successfully repeated, these courses would then be counted as both attempted and completed for the pace calculation. Credits for an incomplete course (e.g., student receives a grade of I for the course) are always counted as credits attempted for quantitative and maximum time frame measures. However, credit for the incomplete course is not included in the GPA or the credits earned count until the incomplete grade changes to a passing or a failing grade.

If a student does not maintain the expected educational pace, the student has not met the requirements for SAP.

Summer term is not treated any differently than any other term as it is included in the total time to complete.

**Maximum Timeframe Measure**
The maximum timeframe for Satisfactory Academic Progress is identical to the maximum timeframe defined by the Medical College of Wisconsin Graduate School’s policy which is the following:

**Degrees**

**Doctor of Philosophy**
Enrolled as full-time students, PhD candidates function as research assistants and are also considered part-time Medical College of Wisconsin Employees. 60-credit minimum, average 5 year completion with a limit of 7 years. This degree program is fully funded by Graduate Departments.

**Master of Science**
This program accommodates accelerated or part-time schedules. 30-credit minimum, average 2 year completion with a limit of 4 years.

A full-time student is required to have completed a minimum of 15 credits after 2 years to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress.

**Master of Arts**
This program accommodates accelerated or part-time schedules. 30-credit minimum, average 2 year completion with a limit of 4 years.

A full-time student is required to have completed a minimum of 15 credits after 2 years to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress.

**Master Public Health**
This is a web-based program designed for those with an interest in public and community health or occupational health. 42-credit minimum, full or part-time with a limit of 5 years.

A full-time student is required to have completed a minimum of 15 credits after 2 years to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress.

**Non-Credit Remedial Courses** – Not applicable at the professional/graduate level.

**Financial Aid Warning, Probation, Appeal Process and Loss of Aid Eligibility**
Financial Aid Warning:

- Students who fail to meet either the qualitative or quantitative standards set forth in this policy after a semester will be notified that he or she will be given a warning. The student will continue to receive federal financial aid for one payment period/semester (referred to as the warning period)

Financial Aid Probation, Appeal Process and Loss of Aid Eligibility

- If the student has not regained SAP at the end of the warning period, the student will be placed on probation only if an appeals form is completed in writing within seven days of the notification and the appeal is approved by the Financial Aid office. If the appeal is approved by the Financial Aid office, the student will be placed on Financial Aid probation

- Students on financial aid probation may continue to receive financial aid funds for one academic period.

An Appeals Process to have Financial Aid Reinstated:

A student can appeal the decision to deny financial aid as a result of failure to meet requirements for SAP. In addition, the appeal must demonstrate that: 1.) there were extenuating circumstances that caused the student to fail to meet the requirements for SAP (i.e. a death in the student’s immediate family, a student’s medical illness or injury or other undue hardships and 2.) there is a clear plan in place to meet the requirements of SAP.

If the Financial Aid office approves the appeal, the student will be placed on financial aid probation and will continue to receive financial aid for the next payment period. At the end of the payment period, the Financial Aid office will review the student’s progress toward meeting the requirements for SAP. At this point the student must meet the requirements of the academic plan and for SAP, or he or she will lose financial aid eligibility. The Financial Aid office will notify the student of the change in status and whether the student has maintained or lost financial aid eligibility.

Appeals:

Students who do not meet the minimum standards for satisfactory academic progress may appeal to the Financial Aid office for reinstatement of their financial aid eligibility. Circumstances which may be considered as a basis for an appeal may include family emergency, death in the student’s immediate family, a student’s medical illness or injury, or other undue hardships. Appeals should be submitted in writing and must include relevant documentation. The Financial Aid office must receive the written appeal no later than 60-days after the start of the academic period for which the financial aid is requested. Appeal decisions are final and are not further appealable. If an appeal is denied, the student is not eligible to receive financial aid.

 Loss of Aid Eligibility:
• Students on financial aid probation who fail to meet either the qualitative or quantitative standards will lose their financial aid eligibility;
• The loss of aid eligibility will continue until the student has met both the qualitative and quantitative standards.

To review the Medical College of Wisconsin’s entire policy on Satisfactory Academic Progress for graduate students, please access http://www1.mcw.edu/graduateschool/currentstudents/Handbook/GraduateSchoolPoliciesandProcedures.htm and the information is listed under:

• Graduation Requirements
• Handbook
  o Graduate School Policies and Procedures
    ▪ Grading
    ▪ Probationary Status
    ▪ Annual Evaluation of Graduate Students
    ▪ Repeating Courses